

made and cheerfully anticipate its continuance, while we deplore obstacles that may be interposed.

We must frankly recognize an attendant danger. Counterfeits are ever ready to imitate and supplant genuine merit. We may become so prepossessed with misconceptions of fraternity as to rashly belittle or ignore that which seems to our narrowed vision to restrain or limit its free expression. We accordingly find many sneering at creeds and discrediting doctrinal teaching, and even definite Christian convictions, because forsooth, these may prove to be barriers to untrammelled fellowship. Speakers at popular conventions ring the changes on co-operation and sneer at "distinctive principles." If the secret of the tendency to minimize the authority of the sacred Scriptures were fully exposed, it would probably be found in the appetency of the aspiring critic toward eliminating authoritative sources of difference between that great multitude of appreciative disciples who in his imaginings, may constitute his following. Get the public ear and eliminate all authoritative sources of divided opinion, and your fortune or your reputation is secure.

Now, the just and genuine ground of fraternity is truth. The attainment of one means the realization of the other. We can do nothing against the truth but for the truth. The dissemination of truth is a gradual process, and it may be slow but it is the only process. By the manifestation of truth we are to commend ourselves to every man's conscience. If we have an intelligent and worthy zeal for brotherhood, we can only expect its realization by magnifying truth until all shall see it. In our relation to the church at large our aim and desire should be, "that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding," "until we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

#### "RIGHTFULNESS" OR "PRUDENCE."

##### In the Supervising Work of Appellate Church Courts.

Our Book of Church Order gives to the appellate courts of the Church an almost unlimited authority of review and control of the acts of the lower courts. This is wise. Occasions arise, and not seldom, in which it is necessary for the appellate court to have the fullest authority.

Yet it is not always wise that the appellate court should exercise all this authority. In training a child the parent does not use all the power that is lodged in his hands. The training is better if the parent forbear, and, in cases where no great harm will result, let the youth act for himself. So it is with the Presbytery or Synod or General Assembly. It is not always wise for the upper court to criticise too much.

Is an illustration wanted? We have seen Presbyteries waste hours over a criticism of a sessional record, because the "minutes" of a congregational meeting to elect officers was recorded in the same page with sessional acts. The issue was not worth the time spent on it. The interjection of a surplusage in the minute book did not do so much harm as the wasting of two hours of Presbytery's time in discuss-

ing it. It is often wise to ignore that which can safely be ignored.

#### What Classes of Actions Need Review?

In the life of a church, questions are constantly arising which are of a doctrinal character; frequently there are questions of discipline; and sometimes questions that are merely administrative. If a preacher be reported as teaching false doctrine, and the lower court allow him to continue in such a course, it is important that the appellate court should take notice of the fact and, if the error be of consequence, proceed to correct it. If it be reported that such sins as drunkenness have been ignored by a church session, the Presbytery ought to take notice thereof. These are matters of doctrine and of discipline.

But in matters that are merely administrative, while there may sometimes be a need for supervision on the part of the superior court, yet is it not ordinarily wise to forbear criticism?

We have in mind such questions as the location of a church building on one street or another: the erection of a building for institutional uses, such as reading rooms; or the appointment of hours of service. Unless there be some special reason, these matters are best settled by the session; and the Presbytery may well accept its decision. So also with the reception of this or that person as a member of the church. It is indeed possible for a session to err so gravely in the admission of members as to call for supervision by the Presbytery, but ordinarily the superior court may well trust the action of the lower court.

These administrative questions include the election and ordination of officers, the management of ordinary trusts, the arrangements for evangelizing waste places, the control of the society work within its bounds, or the assignment of individual workers to particular forms of work. The decision of the lower court may not always be wisest, but in most cases concurrence is less injurious than a prolonged discussion and possible ill feeling. Even if a few hundred dollars be wasted, the loss of money may amount to less than the loss of harmony.

In the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, there has been great injury because of the recent attempt to force the judgment of a bare majority upon all the congregations in that Church. Happy had it been for the Master's kingdom, if its General Assembly had taken such action as would leave the individual congregations more liberty of choice and thus avoided the occasion for many a lawsuit and much bitter strife.

We have been speaking of the Church, not as it ought to be, but as it is. It ought to be that the spirit of mutual love would prevent clashes. Alas! it is not always thus. We have need, therefore, in our church work, to be first pure then peaceable; both pure and peaceable.

The world can not be organized into godliness, or preached into godliness, but it may be led into godliness. The simple, quiet, unposing practice of their professions by Christians would do more to set this old world right than all the powerful organizations that bear the Christian name.